

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 11751

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: MILI, PINT, RP

SUBJECT: PRESS COVERAGE OF BASES ISSUES

REF: (A) MANILA 9449, (B) MANILA 11407

1. SUMMARY: MANILA PRESS OF JULY 29 CARRIED ASSORTMENT OF ITEMS ON US BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES, INCLUDING ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE SECRETARY ABAD SANTOS' PROPOSALS FOR REDUCING RP-US FRICTION, STORY ON PROBLEM OF PX GOODS SMUGGLING, AND EDITORIAL COMMENT CITING FAVORABLE SHIFT IN RP-US RELATIONS. WE ON BALANCE PRESS TREATMENT INDICATES WE HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS IN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS AREA, BUT MUCH WORK REMAINS ON GETTING AT THE ESSENCE OF BASES-RELATED PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. ALL THREE MAJOR MANILA DAILIES GAVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO JULY 28 "DIALOGUE" OF SECRETARY OF JUSTICE ABAD SANTOS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FROM PROVINCES NEAR CLARK AND SUBIC. ACCORDING TO BULLETIN TODAY, ABAD SANTOS SAID JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HAS COME UP WITH TWO MEASURES DESIGNED TO MINIMIZE RP-US FRICTION OVER THE BASES. FIRST
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PROPOSAL IS THAT PHILIPPINE MILITARY LIAISON OFFICES BE MOVED OUTSIDE OF BASES TO MAKE THEM MORE ACCESSIBLE TO FILIPINO CITIZENS. SECOND PROPOSAL CALLS FOR "STRICT IMPLEMENTATION" OF PRACTICES OF HANDLING AMERICANS APPREHENDED FOR CRIMINAL OFFENSES OUTSIDE THE BASES, RELEASING SUSPECTS ONLY AFTER CUSTODY RECEIPT HAS BEEN SIGNED BY US COMMANDING OFFICER. ABAD SANTOS REPORTEDLY

TOLD THE LOCAL OFFICIALS HE WAS FORWARDING THESE PROPOSALS TO THE DEPARTMENTS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. PRESS ALSO REPORTED ABAD SANTOS SAID THAT DURING EMBASSY LEGAL OFFICER HITT'S RECENT COURTSEY CALL, HE MADE CLEAR TO HITT TWO MESSAGES: DO NOT USE DOGS AGAINST FILIPINOS AND DO NOT ATTEMPT TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY OUTSIDE US BASES.

3. DAILY EXPRESS RAN ON FRONT-PAGE BESIDE THE ABAD SANTOS' STORY AN ARTICIEL HEADLINED, "US DEPENDENTS EYED AS BLACK MARKET SOURCE." STORY SAID PHILIPPINES CUSTOMS OFFICIALS HAVE PLACED 2,000 AMERICANS LIVING OFF-BASE AT ANGELES CITY UNDER SURVEILLANCE AS PART OF CRACKDOWN ON BLACK MARKET. ARTICLE SAID AMERICAN DEPENDENTS MAJOR SOURCE OF ILLEGAL RESALE OF PX GOODS AND CLAIMED THAT SEVERIST PENALTY FOR THOSE CAUGHT IS CONFISCATION OF PX CARDS.

4. IN CONTRAST, TWO WELL-KNOWN TIMES JOURNAL COLUMNISTS HAD GOOD THINGS TO SAY ABOUTOUR HANDLING OF BASES IRRITANTS. HABITUALLY ANTI-AMERICAN ERNIE GRANADA SAID CLARK "HAS RELENTED" ON COURT SUMMONS FOR SERVICEMEN CHARGED WITH VARIOUS CRIMES IN PHILIPPINE COURTS. GRANADA ATTRIBUTED THIS "CHANGE IN ATTITUDE" TO CHARGE STULL, WHOM HE SAID "SO FAR HAS MAINTAINED THE MOST ENLIGHTENED RELATIONS WITH THE FILIPINOS." COLUMNIST FRANCISCO DE LEON ECHOED THIS SENTIMENT IN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "BASE OFFICIALS IN TURNABOUT." DE LEON NOTED THAT DECISION OF CLARK CONFIDENTIAL

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AUTHORITIES TO PLACE UNDER INTERNATIONAL HOLD FIVE AMERICANS FACING CHARGES IN PHILIPPINES INDICATES " A SHIFT FOR THE BETTER IN PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN RELATIONS...THE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THECLARK FIELD CASES IS A HEALTHY SIGN NOT ONLY IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE UNITED STATES BUT ALSO IN THE COMING RESUMPTION OF TALKS ON THE BASES."

5. COMMENT: ABAD SANTOS' REMARKS CONTAIN THE USUAL FACTUAL ERRORS OR DISTORTIONS (AS DO OTHER PRESS ITEMS MENTIONED ABOVE) AND REFLECT HIS WELL-(KNOWN TENDENCY TO REACH FOR HEADLINES. NEVERTHELESS, FACT THAT HE HAS MADE CONCRETE (ALBEIT MISGUIDED) PROPOSALS ON BASES ISSUES REPRESENTS MILDLY ENCOURAGING TREND. WITH ABAD SANTOS KICKED UPSTAIRS TO THE SUPREME COURT AND EXPECTED TO RESIGN AS JUSTICE SECRETARY, AND WITH SOLICITOR GENERAL MENDOZA THE LIKELY CHOICE TO REPLACE HIM, WE MAY AT LEAST BE FREE SHORTLY OF ABAD SANTOS' BRAND OF HASTY OVER-REACTION. DURING PAST MONTH, PRESS HAS BEEN FILLED WITH ACCOUNTS OF GOP CRACKDOWN ON BLACK MARKETING OF PX GOODS. NEW CUSTOMS COMMISSIONER, COL RAMON FAROLAN, UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE OF PRESIDENT MARCOS' INTEREST IN THIS

PROBLEM, WHICH WAS EXPRESSED TO CHARGE JUNE 20 (SEE REF
A). WE BELIEVE RARE FAVORABLE EDITORIAL COMMENT IN TIMES
JOURNAL REFLECTS IN PART OUR EFFORTS IN PAST FEW MONTHS
TO BE RESPONSIVE WHERE POSSIBLE TO PHILIPPINE CONCERNS ON
THE BASES, IN ATTEMPT TO CREATE ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH
SERIOUS, NON-POLEMICAL DISCUSSIONS OF IRRITANTS CAN TAKE
PLACE. PROGRESS SO FAR HAS BEEN LIMITED TO SOME PUBLIC
RELATIONS SUCCESS, AND THE ESSENCE OF THE BASES-RELATED
PROBLEMS REMAIN. PRESS TREATMENT CONTINUES TO REMIND US
AS WELL OF THE ENDURING AND HIGHLY EMOTIONAL CONTENT OF
BASES ISSUES.

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